

# **Investigating Cohesive Ties Devices in Students' Writings of Muria Kudus University**

Slamet Utomo  
University of Muria Kudus  
Indonesia

## **Introduction**

I am one of lecturers at Muria Kudus University who concerns in teaching writing. A good writing should fulfill the quality of reading text; Cohesion and Coherence, but Cohesion can be used as a measurement that a text is good or not. A text which is written in a good cohesion can also be in a good coherence. So, we can say that a text is good if it is written cohesively, like what Halliday and Hasan(1989) said.

Based on the importance of cohesion and coherence in writing, I tried to investigate the cohesion found in students' writing. I have taught writing for more than twenty years, but I still found the students' writing are not cohesive. Their writings are difficult to understand, because they created ambiguity and the clauses sometimes are not related to each other.

I am not satisfied with the students' writing, especially in their assignments of genre based writing subject. In order to understand a text easily, I trained my students to write texts cohesively. They have to understand well about cohesive ties devices, either grammatical or lexical cohesive ties devices. The text is written cohesively if it does not contain many exophoric references. Exophoric reference is reference which does not refer to anything, it will create confusion and ambiguity. By understanding cohesion, hopefully it can reduce ambiguity. Finally, the students' writings can be understood easily because they are written cohesively. As a lecturer of writing, I have to pay attention to the qualities of a good text, they are cohesion and coherence.

## **Statements of the Problems**

This study is conducted to find out the grammatical and lexical cohesive ties devices found in the students' writings of English Education department and to what extent of

the students' writing cohesiveness of English Education Department of Muria Kudus University.

## **Literature Review**

### *Text*

A text is used in linguistics refers to any passages, spoken or written of whatever length, that does form a unified whole. A text is best regarded as a semantic unit : a unit not form but of meaning. Thus, it is a clause or sentence not by size but by realization, the coding symbolic system in another. (Halliday & Hasan, 1989)

A text is mind of the reader, the text itself contains only of instruction for reader as how to retrieve or construct that meaning. The words of a text evoke in the reader concepts, their past interrelationships, and their potential interrelationships as defined by their semantic properties. (Marilyn Jager Adam, 1980)

Reading is private. It is a mental or a cognitive process, which involves a reader in trying to follow and response a message from a writer who is distance in space and time (Florence Davies, 1995). Reading is a thinking process, since its central aspect is extracting meaning from point. The essential unit of meaning is the idea, the concept, the thought, the image, the statement. Meaning does not emerge from an arbitrary string of words, but from words in relationship. The sum total of these relationships make up the context of the reading material, and only within a context do words (or other symbols) have meaning. (Thomas and Robinson, 1972)

A text should have two properties, cohesion and coherence. The term cohesion refers to the way we relate or tie together bits of our discourse, whereas coherence refers to the way group of clauses or sentences relate to the context. If we can not identify cohesive tie, it is this absence of semantic ties between elements in the paragraph that prevents it from hanging together internally as a piece of language ( Halliday and Hasan, 1989)

A good text is a text that does not create confusion or worse because the author himself has failed to maintain a consistent imagined reader from sentence to sentence or paragraph to paragraph. (Malcolm Couthard, 1981)

### *Cohesion*

Cohesion means that a group of sentences which tie together (Halliday and Hasan, 1989)

Halliday and Hasan (1989) classified cohesion into :

#### 1. Grammatical cohesive devices

Grammatical cohesive devices can be reference ( pronominal, demonstrative, definite article and comparative), it is called co-reference. Grammatical cohesive devices can also be substitutions and ellipsis (nominal, verbal and clausal). It is called co-classification.

Example : *The benefit of coffee can be tasted from the first to enjoy it.*

The word it refers to coffee. The word it is personal reference. This personal pronoun is considered to be an anaphoric reference.

#### 2. Lexical cohesive devices

Lexical cohesive devices can be : repetition, synonymy, antonymy. It is called co-extension.

Example : - *Kretek Museum is an Indonesian largest Cigarette museum. To commemorate the great leaders who have been instrumental in the cigarette industry in Kudus.*

The word cigarette refers back to research. This word is call lexical reiteration, it is a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of a lexical item. This belongs to repetition.

### **Methods of Investigation**

The data that are gathered through documents , in this study are the documented materials of the students' writings as assignments in the Genre Based writing subject of English Education Department.

#### 1. Selecting the data

There are 43 students of genre based writing. I have selected ten students' writings randomly. They are written by students of English Education Department.

## 2. Deciding the data

There are 8 functional short texts. They are; Congratulation, Condolences, Invitation, Advertisement, School Regulation, Descriptive Text, Report Text, and Recount. I used one short functional text namely Descriptive text.

## 3. Analysis of the data

I analyzed the data based on Halliday and Hasan (1989). The students' writings are analyzed on the basis of the following steps : (1) to find out cohesive ties, cohesive chains, chain interaction, grammatical cohesion, lexical cohesion, (2) to interpret the data by; putting clause by clause of reading passages I bars, analyzing word by word to get cohesive ties, making lists of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices, drawing the chain interaction, making lists of lexical rendering, drawing the chain interaction and counting the number of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices, (3) to interpret the result.

Following are examples of each type of cohesion :

1. *I have a pet. It is a hamster, and I call it Brownie because the color is brownish yellow.*

The pronoun it refers to a pet. it belongs to a singular pronoun.

2. *Skin is an important organ of the human body and performs many special functions.*

The word and is an additive conjunction.

## 4. Interpretation

The result of analysis are interpreted based on the number of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. If the number of anaphoric references are much more than the exospheric references, the reading passages are considered to be more cohesive, but on the other hand, if the reading passages consist of more exospheric references than the anaphoric ones, these reading passages are considered to be less cohesive.

## Research Findings

The findings are based on the analysis of types of cohesion of reading passages, i.e. 1) co-referentiality, 2) co-classification, 3) co-extension. The findings are also based on the analysis of levels of cohesion of reading passages, i.e. 1) grammatical cohesive

devices, 2) frequency of 1 per clause, 3) percentage of 1 entering in chains, 4) explicit lexical tokens, 5) cohesive interpreted lexical tokens, 6) total lexical tokens, 7) percentage of 1 interpreted anaphorically, 8) percentage of 1 interpreted exophorically, and 9) percentage of 1 interpreted ambiguity.

The finding of the research can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The number of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices found in those reading students' writings.

No	Items	Texts									FW
		JP	NA	BS	IAS	WC W	MA R	LM	EL	SS	
1.	Grammatical and lexical devices	13	12	10	11	15	22	14	18	6	16
2.	Frequency of 1 per clause	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.3	0.55	1.2
3.	Percentage of 1 entering in chain	17.4	41	14	15.5	14.5	81	10.1	10.5	28.1	14.2
4.	Explicit interpreted lexical tokens	14	5	14	18	22	18	16	19	16	15
5.	Cohesive interpreted lexical tokens	21	32	26	22	34	37	17	43	12	21
6.	Total lexical tokens	36	37	41	40	57	55	33	62	32	45
7.	5 percentage of 6	29	43	32	55	31	33	26	61	25	31
8.	Percentage of 1 interpreted anaphorically	65	33	52	50	65	86	96	73	79	58
9.	Percentage of 1 interpreted exophorically	35	64	48	50	35	14	4	27	21	42
10.	Percentage of 1 interpreted ambiguous	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

According to Halliday and Hasan (1989), a text is considered whether it is cohesive or less cohesive by looking at the number of anaphoric and exospheric references. A text is considered to be more cohesive if it has more anaphoric references than exospheric ones.

When I look at the table above, the most cohesive text among the nine texts is text LM. This text has 96% anaphoric reference, and 4% exospheric one. When we look at cohesive ties, co-classification, this text is linked closely by some kinds of cohesive ties,

co-classification, such as nominal ellipsis. Ellipsis is always cohesive, there is no ambiguity in ellipsis. Ellipsis is always anaphoric, this is always presupposed by certain words, either noun, verb, or clause. In text LM consists of nominal ellipsis. In cohesive ties, co-extension, LM has four kinds of cohesive ties, co-extension, such as ; synonymy, antonymy, meronymy and repetition. Text LM is considered to be a good text because there are some reasons (1) it has more anaphoric references than exospheric ones. (2) It has more anaphoric of cohesive ties, co-referentiality than exospheric ones. (3) This text is linked by ellipsis closely in cohesive ties, co-classification, and (4) this text has covered all kinds of cohesive ties, co-extension. It means that this text is understandable. This text may not make ambiguity, so this text is easy for students to comprehend.

If we look at the table above, I conclude that the text, which has the least anaphoric references is text NA, it has 33% anaphoric and 64% exospheric and 3% ambiguous. Text NA is considered to be the least cohesive among the nine reading passages because this text may cause ambiguity. It has some reasons, (1) this text is not good enough in term of cohesive ties, co-referentiality, such as; pronominal, demonstrative, definite article and comparative. Most of cohesive ties are exospheric, it means that the text is not easy enough for students to understand. (2) This text is not good enough in term of cohesive ties, co-classification. This text has tied by two of cohesive ties, c0-classification, such as; substitutions, and ellipsis. This text is considered to be the least cohesive because this text consists of more exospheric references than anaphoric ones. (3) This text is neither good in term of cohesive ties, co-extension. This is repetition. Repetition sometimes makes students feel bored. This text has also 3% ambiguity, it means that this text can create confusion.

The following table presents the percentage of cohesiveness of students' writings.

Table 2. The level of cohesiveness of 10 reading passages

No	Text	Level	Anaphoric (%)	Exospheric (%)	Ambiguous (%)
1.	LM	1	96	4	-
2.	MAR	2	86	14	-
3.	SS	3	79	21	-
4.	EL	4	73	27	-

5.	JP	5	65	35	-
6.	WCW	6	65	35	-
7.	FW	7	58	42	-
8.	IAS	8	50	50	-
9.	BS	9	42	58	-
10	NA	10	33	64	3

From the result of the analysis above, the ten students' writing (JP, NA, BS, IAS, WCW, MAR, LM, EL, SS, FW) stated in terms of cohesion (following Halliday and Hasan's principle of reading passages) respectively the average score of anaphoric references 96% for text LM, 86% for text MAR, 79% for text SS, 73% for text EL, 65% for text JP and WCW, 58% for text FW, 50% for text IAS, 42% for text BS, 33 for NA.

After consulting to Halliday's and Hasan's principles of cohesion of the text (1989), the most cohesive students' writings among the ten students' writing is text LM. Text LM is considered to be the first level of cohesiveness among the ten students' writing, because this text is the most cohesive among those texts. This text is considered to be the most cohesive because this text has more anaphoric references than exospheric ones.

Text LM in the table above has more exospheric references than anaphoric ones. This text is the lowest level among the ten students' writings, because this text has more exospheric references than anaphoric ones. And this text also has 4% ambiguity. This text is considered to be the least cohesive and it is also the lowest level of cohesiveness out of ten students' writings, meaning that the text is not understandable. This text may create ambiguity.

## Conclusion

From the result of the study above, some conclusions have been drawn, as follows:

(1) A text is considered to be cohesive, if the sentences and paragraphs are written closely related one to another. The sentences and paragraphs are linked closely by using cohesion, such as references (it belongs to cohesive ties, co-referentiality), substitutions, ellipsis (they belong to cohesive ties, co-classification), or lexical cohesion (it belongs to cohesive ties, co-extensions). Cohesion is one of requirements that determines the value of the text good or not. This coincides with Halliday and

Hasan (1989) who write that a text is regarded to be good it consists of more anaphoric references than exospheric ones.

(2) when we look at the numbers of cohesion that are stated among ten students' writings, the text LM has more anaphoric references than exospheric ones. When we look at the types of cohesion, this text has all types, such as, co-referential, co-classification, and co-extension cohesive ties.

Based on the findings above I conclude that text LM is the most cohesive reading passage. This text may be understood more easily by students because it may not create ambiguity.

When we look at the list of cohesive level. Text NA is the least level of cohesiveness among nine reading passages. It has 33% anaphoric reference, 64% exospheric ones, and 3% ambiguity. The ambiguity of the text is for example, the use of the word "second", since there is no the word "first" in the text. This word may create ambiguity. We can see that among ten students of English Education Department 50 % ( five students ) written texts cohesively and 50% ( five students ) less cohesively.

## References

- Coulthard, M. (1981). *Studies in discourse analysis*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Coulthard, M. (1986). On composing and evaluating text. *The Modern Language Journal*, 3, 179 -187
- Celce-Murcia, et al.(1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *The Modern Language Journal*, 6, 10-11
- Garot, L & Wignell, P. (1995). *Making sense of functional grammar*. Sydney :Gerd Stabler
- Halliday, M.A.K & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social – semiotic perspective*. Victoria: Deakin University Press
- Halliday, M.A.K & Hasan, R. (1994). *Cohesion in English*. Singapore: Longman Singapore Publisher (Pte) Ltd.
- Halliday, M.A.K and Hasan, R. (1984). *Language as social semiotic*. London : Athenaeum Press Ltd.